

# Northern Messenger

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## The Meaning of 'Saul.'

(Concluded.)

In the first part of this wonderful poem you found the song with which David roused Saul from the bodily stupor into which he had been thrown by the realization of his own mistakes, his own utter failure to reach his own ideal of Kingship or God's measure of a perfect man.

What more can the shepherd lad do? Not much truly! The 'Cease to do evil' is heard and heeded in Saul's heart, but he has yet no will to do good; no will to use the great gifts God has given him. In answer to the cry of David's heart for help, comes true inspiration.

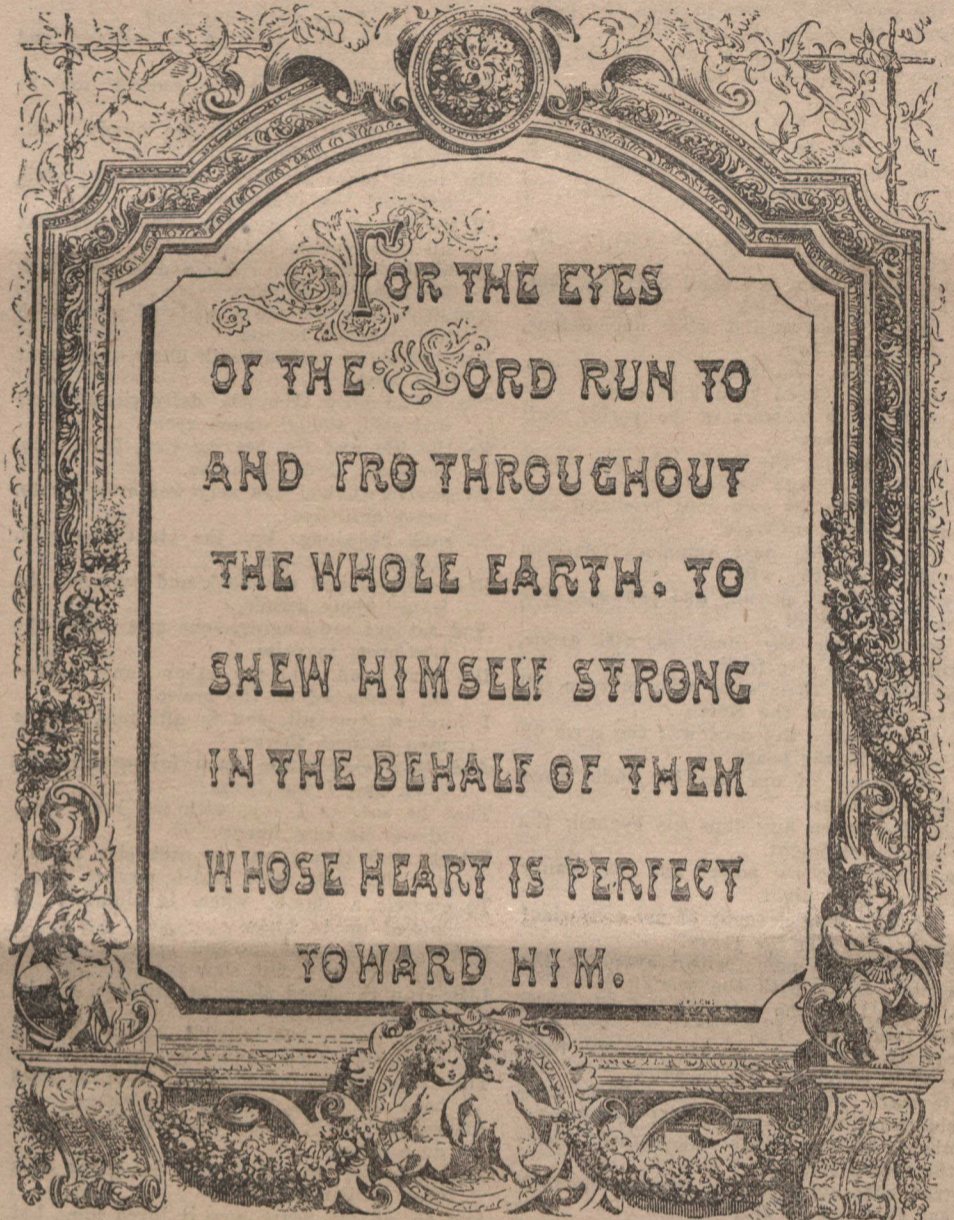
David pauses an instant,—what next shall he urge to sustain the King where song has restored him? How shall he arouse in Saul the desire to live and the hope to achieve? He recalls certain fancies he has pleased himself with while tending his flocks. 'Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains, And the prudence that keeps what men strive for' . . . . .

David grows surer, and once more he sings. He passes from the mere mortal life 'held in common by man and by brute,' to extol the things of the spirit, and the glorious prospects of the King, whose deeds shall thrill a whole people, whose fame as the great First King shall live through future ages. As he sings, Saul slowly resumes his old motions and habitudes kingly. He begins to live once more. As David looks up to know if the best he could do has brought solace, the King places his hand tenderly on the young singer's brow, and the heart of the youth goes out in love and yearning to his King. He would help him further, were it in his power, he would give him 'new life altogether, as good, ages hence, as this moment.' But shall he, who has had faith in the least things, distrust in the greatest of all? Is not God's love greater even than his? If he would do so much for the suffering man, would interpose to snatch 'Saul the mistake, Saul the failure,' from his dark dreams and bid him win, by the pain-throb, intensified bliss, and 'the next world's reward and repose by the struggles in this,'—surely God would exceed all that David, in his love, would desire to do. In a prophetic outburst the singer tells Saul of the Redeemer who is to spring from David's line:

'O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

David leaves the tent and goes home through the night, surrounded by 'clouds of witnesses' angels who have listened to his prophecy. The whole universe seems awakened, all creation palpitates with emotion at the news, until the tumult is quenched by holy behest, and the earth again sinks to rest. But with the new day's tender birth it is seen that the objects of Nature have felt the new law, and agree, 'E'en so, it is so!'



—From the 'Children's Friend,' published by Seely, Jackson & Halliday, London.

## Saul.

(By Robert Browning.)

(Concluded.)

What spell or what charm,  
(For, awhile there was trouble within me),  
what next should I urge  
To sustain him where song had restored  
him?—Song filled to the verge  
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing  
all that it yields  
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the  
beauty: beyond, on what fields,  
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to  
brighten the eye  
And bring blood to the lip, and commend  
them the cup they put by?  
He saith, 'It is good;' still he drinks not:  
he lets me praise life,  
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

Then fancies grew rife  
Which had come long ago on the pasture,  
when round me the sheep  
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled  
slow as in sleep;  
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the  
world that might lie

'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip  
'twixt the hill and the sky:  
And I laughed—'Since my days are ordained  
to be passed with my flocks  
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the  
plains and the rocks,  
Dream that life I am never to mix with, and  
image the show  
Of mankind as thy live in those fashions I  
hardly shall know!  
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses,  
the courage that gains,  
And the prudence that keeps what men strive  
for.' And now these old trains  
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer;  
so, once more the string  
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as  
thus:—

'Yea, my King,'  
I began—'thou dost well in rejecting mere  
comforts that spring  
From the mere mortal life held in common  
by man and by brute: